

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4404
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
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AMMAN FOR AMB ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEPR IS
SUBJ: ISRAELI PRESS COMMENTS ON DAYAN'S KNESSET STATEMENT OF
GOI'S POSITION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ISRAELI PRESS COMMENTS EXTENSIVELY ON
DAYAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE GOI WOULD BE PREPARED TO
DISCUSS, AFTER A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS, THE QUESTION OF
SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. REACTIONS
TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT VARY, AS DOES SPECULATION CONCERNING THE
INTENTION OF THE PERCEIVED SOFTENING OF THE GOI POSITION, ITS
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SIGNIFICANCE AND THE REASONS BEHIND THE CHANGE. EDITORIAL
RESPONSE IS MIXED. END SUMMARY

2. FOREIGN MINISTER MOSHE DAYAN ANNOUNCED IN THE KNESSET
YESTERDAY THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS, AFTER
A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS, THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE
WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. THE ANNOUNCEMENT, WHICH IS THE

MAJOR TOPIC IN THIS MORNING'S (JULY 25) PRESS, IS WIDELY INTERPRETED AS GOING BEYOND THE GOI CABINET'S JUNE 18 RESPONSE TO THE "TWO AMERICAN QUESTIONS." AS THE JERUSALEM POST (RUBINSTEIN) POINTS OUT, THE CABINET HAD AVOIDED USING THE WORD "SOVEREIGNTY," PREFERRING THE VAGUER FORMULATION THAT IT WOULD BE PREPARED, AFTER FIVE YEARS, TO CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES.

3. DAYAN'S DECLARATION WAS PART OF A GOI STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH LED OFF A FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID IT WAS ONE OF THREE POINTS HE HAD SUBMITTED, IN HIS OWN NAME, TO SECRETARY VANCE AT LEEDS CASTLE, AND WHICH HE WAS NOW RESTATING ON BEHALF OF THE GOI. THE OTHER TWO POINTS WERE:

A) SHOULD EGYPT PROPOSE A PEACE TREATY BASED ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE, ISRAEL WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER IT; AND

B) ISRAEL WILL NOT AGREE TO A PEACE PROPOSAL BASED ON WITHDRAWAL TO THE JUNE 4, 1967, BOUNDARIES, WITH INFINITESIMAL ADJUSTMENTS, EVEN IF THESE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY SECURITY GUARANTEES.

4. THE POST'S LANDAU ASSERTS THAT DAYAN'S STATEMENT WAS INTENDED AS A DELIBERATE SOFTENING OF ISRAEL'S POSITION, DIRECTED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. HE NOTES THAT DAYAN UNCLASSIFIED

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CAREFULLY SOUNDED A CONCILIATORY CHORD THROUGHOUT HIS ADDRESS. LANDAU QUOTES "WELL-PLACED SOURCES" AS SAYING THAT, FOLLOWING LAST WEEK'S MEETING AT LEEDS CASTLE, ISRAEL COULD NO LONGER CLAIM ITS PEACE PLAN WAS NOT BEING NEGOTIATED, OR THAT EGYPT HAD NOT RESPONDED WITH ITS OWN COUNTER-PROPOSALS. HOWEVER UNPALATABLE THE EGYPTIAN POSITION WAS, THESE SOURCES REPORTEDLY SAID, A SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATION, BASED ON THE TWO SIDES' PROPOSALS, HAD NOW BEEN JOINED. ISRAEL HAD THEREFORE DECIDED "NOT TO STICK TO ITS EARLIER FORMULA, WHICH THE ARAB SIDE CONSIDERS A RECIPE FOR DEADLOCK. WE HAVE EVERY INTEREST IN ADVANCING THE NEGOTIATIONS.... AND HENCE WE HAVE ADOPTED THIS MORE POSITIVE STANCE." LANDAU ALSO REPORTS THAT WESTERN DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HAVE INTERPRETED DAYAN'S STATEMENT AS A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT FROM THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE ISRAEL HAD GIVEN TO THE U.S. QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE ISSUE ONE MONTH AGO. "THIS SEEMS TO REPRESENT THE SORT OF RESPONSIVENESS WASHINGTON WAS LOOKING FOR," ONE WESTERN OBSERVER IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID.

5. HAARETZ (BENZIMAN) HOLDS THAT THE NEW GOI POSITION IS BASED ON THE EXPECTATION THAT ITS ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY AN AMERICAN QUID PRO QUO IN THE SHAPE OF AN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND WASHINGTON CONCERNING THE

CENTRAL COMPONENTS OF ANY PROPOSED SETTLEMENT FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. BENZIMAN CLAIMS THAT THE GOI IS HOPING THE U.S. WILL REPEAT ITS POSITION, PREVIOUSLY CONVEYED TO ISRAEL, THAT SUCH PROPOSALS WOULD BE BASED ON:

A) AN ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE ACROSS THE GREEN LINE;
B) THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES TO NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE AREAS WILL BE STRICTLY LOCAL PALESTINIANS;
AND
C) POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC GUARANTEES WILL BE GIVEN BY THE U.S. FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE SETTLEMENT TO BE REACHED FOR THE AREAS.

6. DAVAR'S BLOCH REPORTS ON VARIOUS REACTIONS HE CLAIMS TO HAVE HEARD TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS CHANGE IN THE GOI'S
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STAND. BLOCH REPORTS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER YADIN TOLD HIM THAT HE (YADIN) WELCOMED DAYAN'S STAND, AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN ALSO REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE CHANGE IN THE GOI POSITION. HOWEVER, BLOCH ALSO REPORTS THAT CERTAIN LIKUD CIRCLES CRITICIZED THE CHANGE. THEY CONTEND DAYAN MANEUVERED BEGIN INTO AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS POSITION OF PARTIAL AGREEMENTS AND CONCESSIONS, WITHOUT PEACE. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY MAINTAIN (ACCORDING TO BLOCH), NO REAL SHIFT HAS TAKE PLACE IN THE GOI STAND SINCE ALL THIS "WOULD-BE FLEXIBILITY" IS CONTINGENT UPON THE AUTONOMY PLAN BEING ACCEPTED BY THE ARABS.

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7. IN A SEPARATE COMMENTARY, BLOCH PLACES DAYAN'S SPEECH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CABINET SESSION ONE DAY EARLIER. BLOCH COMMENTS THAT DAYAN, SEEING NO POSSIBILITY OF QUICKLY BRIDGING THE GAPS BETWEEN BEGIN'S AND SADAT'S POSITIONS, IS NOW SEEKING TO PURSUE A SERIES OF PARTIAL SETTLEMENTS. THESE SETTLEMENTS, ACCORDING TO BLOCH, WOULD BE AIMED AT SHOWING EGYPT THAT IT IS WORTH ITS WHILE TO CONTINUE THE PEACE PROCESS AND AT PREVENTING EGYPT FROM BEING UNWILLINGLY DRAGGED INTO THE ARAB HARDLINE CAMP.

8. YEDIOT (TAVORI) ADDRESSES THE QUESTION OF WHY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AGREED TO DISCUSS THE SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION ALL OF A SUDDEN WHEN HE WAS SO FIRMLY OPPOSED TO IT A FEW WEEKS
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AGO. TAVORI CLAIMS MK GLASS (NRP) TOLD A NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY FACTION MEETING JULY 24 THAT HE (GLASS) HAD OVERHEARD BEGIN SAYING AT A RECENT CABINET SESSION, "I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN FAVOR OF A DISCUSSION ON THE SOVEREIGNTY QUESTION, BUT HAD I SAID SO FIVE WEEKS AGO, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A GOVERNMENT CRISIS. I WAS SICK AND DID NOT HAVE THE NECESSARY STRENGTH TO COPE WITH IT." TAVORI ALSO REPORTS THAT NONE OF THE NRP MINISTERS ATTENDING THE FACTION MEETING DENIED GLASS' REMARK. DAVAR'S BLOCH ALSO REPORTS ON THIS COMMENT SUPPOSEDLY MADE BY BEGIN.

9. YEDIOT (BEN PORATH) POINTS OUT THAT DAYAN, WITH HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, APPEARS TO BE FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF EZER WEIZMAN. DAYAN, BEN PORATH POINTS OUT, WAS THE INVENTOR OF THE NEBULOUS CONCEPT, "THE NATURE OF THE FUTURE RELATIONS." ONLY THREE WEEKS HAVE GONE BY AND NOW THAT SAME DAYAN HAS MADE CONCESSIONS TO THE U S STAND, ADOPTED ITS VIEWS, AND HAS PROMPTED THE GOI TO CONFIRM WHAT WEIZMAN HAD PROPOSED THREE WEEKS AGO. NO ONE, ACCORDING TO BEN PORATH, CAN EXPLAIN WHY DAYAN HAS ALL OF A SUDDEN ADOPTED THE WEIZMAN FORMULA. HOWEVER, THE YEDIOT WRITER SPECULATES THAT DAYAN NOW APPEARS TO BE "CATCHING UP" WITH WEIZMAN. WHO KNOWS,

CONCLUDES BEN PORATH, WHETHER DAYAN WILL NOT, ONE OF THESE DAYS, PROVE HIMSELF TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN THE DEFENSE MINISTER?

10. THE HAARETZ' EDITORIAL ARGUES "THE PRESENT TURNABOUT IS ALL FOR THE GOOD. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MANAGED TO SHED ITS SELF-IMPOSED INTRANSIGENCE AND INJECT THE POLITICAL PROCESS WITH A SHOT OF MOBILITY." HAARETZ NOTES THAT THE GOI APPEARS TO HAVE ADOPTED A POSITION ON TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE NOT UNLIKE THAT OF THE PPOSITION. AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAS COME CLOSE TO THE OFFICIAL WASHINGTON UNCLASSIFIED

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STAND ON THE AUTONOMY AND SOVEREIGNTY QUESTIONS. HAARETZ SEES THE GOI'S MAIN OBJECTIVE AS PUTTING THE ARABS TO THE TEST. HOWEVER, "IF SADAT SHOULD MEET (ISRAEL) HALFWAY, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE AS GOOD AS ITS WORD." HAARETZ CONCLUDES BY EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT WASHINGTON "WILL APPRECIATE THIS DEVELOPMENT . . . AND EXPLAIN TO SADAT THAT HE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE OPPORTUNITY CREATED FOR A REVIVAL OF THE PEACE TALKS."

11M THE JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL HOLDS THAT DAYAN'S STATEMENT "WAS MOSTLY A REPLAY OF OLD AND FAMILIAR THEMES. SOME PREVIEWS TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S SPEECH FORESHADOWED A MOVE, HOWEVER MINOR, AWAY FROM THE RIGID CERTAINTIES OF OFFICIAL POLICY," ARGUES THE POST. SIMILAR PROMISES WERE FORWARDED BY DAYAN TO SECRETARY VANCE AS PART OF AN ELABORATION ON THE MORE TOUGHLY WORDED GOI CABINET RESOLUTION FAVORED BY PM BEGIN. "A CLOSE LOOK WOULD ALSO DISCLOSE THAT THEY ARE SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF. ISRAEL'S CONCEPT OF AUTONOMY IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO CAIRO . . . WHY SHOULD IT BE ASSUMED THE PRESIDENT SADAT . . . WILL EVER ENDORSE A SCHEME THAT PROMISES TO COVER THE AREAS, BUT PARTICULARLY THE WEST BANK, WITH A VAST NETWORK OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS--AND THUS IN EFFECT FORECLOSE THEIR FUTURE?"

12. MA'ARIV ASKS WHY THE GOI WAS NOT PREVIOUSLY WILLING TO DISCUSS, AFTER FIVE YEARS OF AUTONOMY, THE PERMANENT STATUS OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. AN ISRAELI-AMERICAN CLASH OVER THE RESPONSE TO THE "TWO U S QUESTIONS" COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED HAD THE GOI RESPONDED WITH AN ANSWER WHICH FOLLOWED THE LINES OF DAYAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY. MA'ARIV URGES THAT THE NEW GOI POSITION BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN IMMEDIATE, DYNAMIC AND SOPHISTICATED INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN. LEWIS

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